

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, May, 1901, with transcript, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. HOTEL ROYAL, Rome. May 19, 5 or 6, 1901. Dear Alec:

I cabled you last night, "write fully your plans and wishes Halifax steamers 22 and June 5th, prefer later unless needed." I wish now that I had left out the last sentence. I don't at all like waiting until June 5th, but May 22nd, is pretty early as it would mean the loss of Berlin. If I could get a steamer about the 28th that would be what I would like. But really Alec dear I do not at all understand what you want of me . You say that all are well, but I had better be nearer Elsie. That does not seem to me to mean that Elsie needs me or that you want me to go to Washington. In other words, you simply want me at hand in case of emergencies, now I do not think that I would be much more use to Elsie in Baddeck than here. I think that you are thinking of the daughter that is near you and not of the one that is away. I want to think of the one that needs our help the most really . Now Elsie has Bert, who will devote himself to looking after her, and will I am sure take as good or better care of her than I could unless I were in the same house with her. That I don't believe you want, Elsie is as far as I understand in a perfectly natural condition and unusually well. The only reason for solicitude is the natural anxiety added to by the old fear of her nervous trouble. But if she is well now there is no reason why that should become serious at present at least. By and by I should want to be with her, when I can watch her all the time. Next fall she 2 will be my chief thought naturally. But unless you have some reasons of which neither your letters or cables speak there is nothing especial in her condition to demand my presence in Washington. Now take Daisy — she has only me to think for her now. What I feel very strongly is that her whole future may be affected by what we do now. I am perhaps unnecessarily anxious, but she is a young girl, and when we go back to Baddeck

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she will be alone. There are no young men in Baddeck now, and she will be very open to the approaches of her Washington friend. And next winter I shall be powerless.

I have proposed to leave her and Charles with Mamma until June 5, and go myself to Washington with some friends that sail May 15, but they won't hear of my going alone.

I am in despair of making you understand how I am feeling about things. I honestly want to do what is best all around, and to be where I ought to be, but with the materials at hand I do not know where I ought most to be.

Mamma says she would sail by the next steamer if she thought she were keeping me from you when I ought to be with you. Well if it made no difference to her and Daisy whether I were here or not I should go right back, but she is enjoying this trip, and is seeing all these things for the last time, my leaving her puts a stop to all her travel. She wants to go to Berlin herself, she cannot go without me and Charles. It is not as simple a matter for me to return at once as you thought. I have Daisy and Mamma on one hand and you and Elsie on the other. I know that Daisy and Mamma's pleasure are bound in my staying. I do not know that you and Elsie's need is dependent on my coming. I thought yours was before I heard that you were going 3 to take your father to Baddeck, when I heard that you were it seemed to me you could not need me as you have always got along very well without me with them in Baddeck and Mrs. Bell would look after you. So that I might feel that I could look after my mother and youngest daughter through May, and after that devote myself exclusively to you and your family and Elsie.

Your cable said "All well but think you better be nearer Elsie, my plans dependent on my father's." Now that leaves me entirely in the dark as to where you want me to go. If it is to Washington, then of course I can sail any time, but "nearer" means Baddeck I think, and that is so little nearer that while she is well with Bert to take care of her, it seems to me I am justified in taking the risk of remaining a little further from her, if she is, as cable says, well — and as letters say unusually well. I was troubled about you alone in the V.B., but if

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you are not to be there I think you will be all right taking care of your father and with Mrs. Bell to look after you, hence I might look after my husbandless child and Mother for a few weeks more.

Lovingly yours, Mabel.